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First batch of 442 pilgrims comes home

SEPANG: The first batch of 442 haj pilgrims arrived home via Saudi Airlines Flight SV5644 yesterday.

The aircraft departed King Abdul Aziz International Airport in Jeddah at 9pm (local time) on Saturday and arrived at Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) at 11.20am.

They were greeted by Tabung Haji (TH) deputy chief executive officer Datuk Badlisyah Abdul Ghani and his staff.

The pilgrims comprised 196 men and 246 women.

Badlisyah said the haj this year went smoothly without any untoward incidents.

"We would like to thank the Saudi Arabian government for taking proactive measures, such as boosting security, to ensure a smooth pilgrimage.

"However, we regret that 12 pilgrims died of illnesses.

"Forty-seven flights will be made to bring back the pilgrims from today (yesterday) to Oct 15," he said.

He said TH would conduct a post-mortem after the haj to improve its service.

In total, 22,320 Malaysians have performed the haj this year.

Dr Muhammad Syafiq Muhammad Isa and his wife Dr Hanisah



Zainal Abidin Hamiron and his wife, Zaiton Mustakim, hugging their grandchildren, Muhammad Zahran Aqeef and Ahmad Idris Hanaqi Abdul Muziz (second from right), upon arrival at KLIA yesterday.
 Pic by Ahmad Irham Mohd Noor

Jeffrey said they were grateful that they could perform the haj at a young age, adding that the pilgrimage was an unforgettable experience.

Dr Syafiq, 27, and his wife, who were the youngest couple in the batch, said TH members who had registered for the haj must be ready

as they could be called at the last-minute to perform the pilgrimage.

"I did not expect to be called this year, but after my wife was selected to join the group, I was offered a place as a mahram, or companion.

"This is because the Saudi Arabian government has stated that women

under 45 are not allowed unless accompanied by her mahram," said Dr Syafiq, who works at a hospital in Kuantan.

Dr Hanisah, 26, who works at the same hospital, said her parents' decision to register her for haj when she was a pupil had paved the way for her pilgrimage.